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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000179

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2016
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [NU](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#)
SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT GOMEZ: EQUILIBRIUM AND
LEGISLATION KEY PRIORITIES

REF: MANAGUA 00085

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Newly elected National Assembly President Eduardo Gomez Lopez (APRE) promises to instill equilibrium on the Assembly Junta and focus on the business of lawmaking. His legislative priorities coincide with those of President Bolanos and USG interests: passage of economic legislation required for CAFTA and the Millennium Challenge Corporation; destruction of MANPADS and improved national security legislation; and, social legislation that benefits the Nicaraguan people rather than only furthering the political objectives of the Sandinistas. Gomez seeks an equitable distribution of committee chairs among all Assembly caucuses, opposes amnesty for Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) leader Arnoldo Aleman, and frets that the continued disunity among Nicaraguan's non-FSLN political forces could lead to an Ortega victory in November. Personable, introspective, and soft spoken, Gomez may find his new post daunting, as more aggressive junta members try to run roughshod over his authority in their attempt to advance legislation to their political liking. End Summary.

Gomez Promises to Work Hard, Do Right By All"

¶2. (C) In his January 23 meeting with Ambassador, DCM, and polcouns, newly elected National Assembly President Eduardo Gomez Lopez (reftel), associated with pro-Bolanos party APRE, he outlined his plans and legislative priorities for the new Assembly board of directors (Junta). Defining himself as a man who intends to "do right by all and to do no harm to anyone," Gomez promised to instill "equilibrium" on the Assembly Junta, so it can down to the business of lawmaking. Gomez asserted he will "exert pressure" and impose his position as Junta president in a fair and judicious manner. To start off right, Gomez will meet with the Junta and caucus leaders January 24 to define procedures, legislative priorities, and discuss the chairing of Assembly committees. Gomez related that he had gotten PLC buy-in to cede a few committee chair positions to the smaller caucuses; he is hopeful that the FSLN will also agree to this.

¶3. (C) Gomez shared that he will advocate for professionalism and inclusion on the drafting and deliberation of legislation, noting his legislative priorities are in line with those of President Bolanos, with whom he recently met. Priorities include a package of economic laws -including those required for CAFTA and the MCC; the judicial career law; national security legislation; and social legislation that benefits the Nicaraguan people rather than only

furthering the political objectives of the Sandinistas. He also seeks an equitable distribution of committee chairs among all Assembly caucuses, including the smaller blocs.

14. (C) Ambassador provided Gomez a list of legislation of particular interest to the U.S., underscoring that CAFTA and MCC legislation, resolving the MANPADS destruction, and the passage of a sound penal code are among our priorities. He offered to provide U.S. technical assistance to the Assembly to help with the drafting process. Welcoming the assistance, Gomez sought regular meetings with us on these matters.

The FSLN Sows Discord on the Referendum

15. (C) To Gomez, the Sandinista reaction to President Bolanos' suggestion of holding a referendum on a number of constitutional changes, was predictable. The Sandinistas will continue to spur dissent and conflict because that is what they are best at, explained Gomez. Nonetheless, Gomez believes that both popular and Assembly support for a referendum is noteworthy, and he endorses the initiative.

Overcoming Liberal Disunity

16. (C) Gomez voiced concern over the continuing Liberal disunity, warning that it plays in the hands of the Sandinistas and increases Ortega's chances to win in November. He believes, however, that the PLC is not viable until/unless Aleman loosens his total grip on the party. Although Gomez first ventured that former VP Jose Rizo will likely be the PLC presidential candidate, he retracted this view after his assistant Reynaldo Molina asserted that Aleman is vengeful and he will never allow Rizo to run because Rizo tried to "destroy" Aleman and the PLC in the past. As for Herty Lewites, Gomez predicted that Herty will rejoin Ortega later in the race and run for the FSLN VP slot.

17. (C) Gomez was inclined to believe Eduardo Montealegre (ALN-PC) is the best Liberal option to defeat Ortega, but he expressed doubts about some of Montealegre's supporters. He cited Assembly deputy Yamileth Bonilla, former member of the Nicaraguan communist party, ex-Sandinista, and once an Aleman devotee (and reported paramour) and Eliseo Nunez, who was removed from his position in the Nicaraguan Consulate in New York for alleged malfeasance. Gomez was even more critical of APRE-affiliated presidential candidate Jose Antonio Alvarado -- who when it suits him, exploits APRE resources to his benefit, and when it doesn't, distances himself from APRE and associates with the PLC.

18. (U) BIO: From the department of Chinandega, Eduardo Gomez is an Agronomy Engineer. He has worked most of his life in private industry, particularly in the field of agriculture and the cattle industry. As a politician, Gomez has been affiliated with the Liberal Party (PLC and preceding Liberal Parties) since the 70's. He represented the private sector for Chinandega during the FSLN government. In 1990, he joined the Union Nacional Opositora (UNO), through which Violeta Chamorro was elected President of Nicaragua. In the National Elections of 1996, Mr. Gomez worked for the PLC, supporting the candidacy of Arnaldo Aleman for President. In 2001, he had the opportunity to support the electoral campaign of Enrique Bolanos, in which employed his considerable campaigning skills. He also ran for the National Assembly as Deputy representing Chinandega and won.

Comment

19. (C) Gomez is the first National Assembly president in Nicaraguan history to have been elected unanimously. He can use this to his advantage. His visible interest in working with us on this year's legislative agenda is encouraging, and we expect to meet regularly with him. However, given his personable, introspective, and soft spoken demeanor, Gomez may find his new post daunting, as more aggressive junta

members try to run roughshod over his authority in their attempt to advance their own legislative priorities -- including amnesty for Aleman.

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